Chapter 34: A Hint of Winter

G-
GOOD MORNING.
TSUKI-CHAN, MAKO-CHAN, GOOD MORNING~!
ASUMI AND I (AS HAZUKI) HAVEN'T HAD THE CHANCE TO TALK SINCE OUR DATE.
TSUKIKO HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT, SO I HAVE TO BE SURE TO ACT NORMAL.
It feels wrong to keep things one-sided
I REALLY DON'T LIKE IT WHEN THE WEATHER GETS BAD HERE
IT'S TOO COLD!
ARE YOU NOT COLD, TSUKI-CHAN?
Here I am wearing a sweater and even a scarf
Ah...

Yeah, let's. It's freezing all of the sudden.
Let's go to the flea market to get some winter clothes. I honestly can't stand it anymore.
Whisper
Whisper
N- NO.
NOT REALLY.
THAT'S A LIE! I'M ACTUALLY FREEZING TO DEATH!
Shiver
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
HERE YOU GO.
Softly
Rustle

EH- WHAT?
DID YOU KNIT THIS?
OH,
GOOD, IT SUITS YOU!
I PROMISED I WOULD GIVE ONE TO SAKURAKO, BUT IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE PRACTICED SO I DECIDED TO MAKE A ROUGH ONE FIRST.
I THOUGHT I MIGHT USE IT MYSELF, BUT IF YOU'D LIKE YOU CAN HAVE IT.
IS IT REALLY ALRIGHT...?
TH- THANK YOU.
THAT'S NICE, IT LOOKS WARM.
I'D FEEL BAD, IT WOULD TAKE UP YOUR TIME, RIGHT?
SHOULD I KNIT ONE FOR YOU ONCE I HAVE TIME?
IF I WORK WHILE I'M THINKING ABOUT THINGS IT'LL BE DONE IN NO TIME
SO LONG AS IT'S NOTHING ELABORATE IT SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG

NO.
...NOT REALLY.
THERE ARE A LOT OF EVENTS OVER NEW YEAR'S THOUGH.
WON'T YOU BE BUSY?
Rain
Rain
...I DON'T KNOW.
HOW DO YOU THINK THINGS WILL TURN OUT BETWEEN ASUMI AND YOU IN THE END?

BACK DURING THE FESTIVAL, RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MOMENT I SAID GOODBYE AT THE STATION...
SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE HAD SOMETHING TO SAY.
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I SHOULD HAVE ASKED HER WHAT IT WAS. BUT AT THE TIME, I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY. ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THE SITUATION WITH HOUJOU-SENPAI.
ASUMI HAS MADE ME FEEL A LOT OF HAPPINESS.
...YEAH.
SEE YOU LATER.
JUST AS CLEARLY AS MY FEELINGS OF AFFECTION.
SO EVEN IF I GET REJECTED IN THE END...
I WANT TO CONVEY TO HER MY FEELINGS OF GRATITUDE...

...THAT'S A SECRET!
SO WHAT WAS KEEPING YOU FROM DOING THAT ON YOUR DATE!?
I'M GLAD THE WEATHER'S NICER TODAY!
Chatter
Chatter

BUT I GOT A LOT OF WEIRD LOOKS WHEN PEOPLE SAW ME GOING THROUGH THE WOMEN'S SECTION...
Me too.
WE CAN'T JUST CONVENIENTLY END UP BECOMING GIRLS EVERY TIME THE FLEA MARKET IS OPEN OVER THE WEEKEND, AFTER ALL...
WHAT SORT OF THING DID YOU BUY, HAZUKI?
I GOT A HUGE DISCOUNT ON IT!
Oh, this looks like it'll suit Tsukiko pretty well~
HE COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING IN THE SMALL SIZE THAT HE WAS INTERESTED IN, SO HE AND MAKI-CHAN MUST STILL BE LOOKING AROUND
IS GORO-CHAN COMING?
Avoiding eye contact
Ah, I'm sorry, I'll just take this please.
I came with my sister, but I wonder where she went off to?
?
IT'S STILL NOVEMBER, BUT EVERYTHING'S ALREADY DECORATED FOR CHRISTMAS, HUH?
THOUGH YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT IF YOU JUST STAYED AT THE SCHOOL OR IN THE DORMS
...That's how I dodged the question.
He he he

EAT CAKE WITH MY FAMILY.
Snort
WHAT ARE YOU TWO GOING TO DO FOR CHRISTMAS?
ER... YOUR DAD IS FRENCH, RIGHT?
YEAH.
Both of you!!
WELL WHAT ARE YOU DOING, THEN?
I WONDER IF THAT MEANS HIS DAD IS IN FRANCE.
I DUNNO. I GUESS I'M NOT REALLY DOING ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR.
THINGS MIGHT BE A LITTLE MORE LIVELY IF MY FATHER WERE AROUND, THOUGH.
THAT'S RIGHT, HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO COME HERE FOR NEW YEAR'S..
I WONDER WHAT HIS REASONS ARE

I DON'T REALLY MIND, BUT...
IF YOU ALREADY CONTACTED MOM YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO OUT OF YOUR WAY TO CALL ME AS WELL.
I'M SORRY, TOUMA.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO BE THERE FOR CHRISTMAS.
Eh!?
Eh? Why? For work? To see mom?
BOTH!
IT'S NOT FINE! I'LL SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD TO YOU.
AND INSTEAD, I'LL BE ABLE TO COME OVER THERE FOR A LONG WHILE AROUND NEW YEARS!

IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU, TOO, SO I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.
I BET YOU'RE BECOMING A FINE MAN.
WHAT DID HE MEAN BY HE'D BE ABLE TO STAY FOR A "LONG WHILE"? HE DIDN'T TELL ME HIS ACTUAL SCHEDULE
SHE TOLD ME THAT MY MOM ENDED UP BUYING TWO WHOLE CAKES.
EH, THAT'S GREAT THOUGH IT'S CHRISTMAS SO I'M SURE ONE OF THEM IS CHOCOLATE, TOO.
I THINK THAT AT MY HOUSE MY MOM WILL MAKE THE CAKE...
SHALL I SUMMON YOU TO OUR HOUSE TO HELP OUT, THEN?

TL NOTE: HATSUMODE IS THE FIRST SHRINE VISIT OF THE NEW YEAR.
I WONDER HOW NATSUKI'S DOING IF HE MADE A GIRLFRIEND WHILE I WASN'T LOOKING I BET HE'LL BE GOING OUT A LOT, LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS AND FOR HATSUMODE*
HIM GOING OUT ON A DATE WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND WHILE I EAT WITH THE REST OF THE FAMILY WOULD FEEL PRETTY COLD...
AZUSA'S GOING TO COME OVER FOR CHRISTMAS AS WELL, SO I SHOULD JUST ASK HER WHETHER SHE'S COMING TO AMAGAI OR NOT THEN.
TO THINK THAT AZUSA, WHO ALWAYS CLUNG TO ME, WOULD START WALKING A DIFFERENT PATH... IT'S TRUE THAT I HADN'T EVEN CONSIDERED IT.
THAT MAYU, JUST SAYING WHATEVER SHE PLEASES.
SIGH
?
We're done~

HA HA HA HA
EAT CAKE WITH MY FAMILY!
Same as everyone, huh?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO FOR CHRISTMAS, GORO-CHAN?

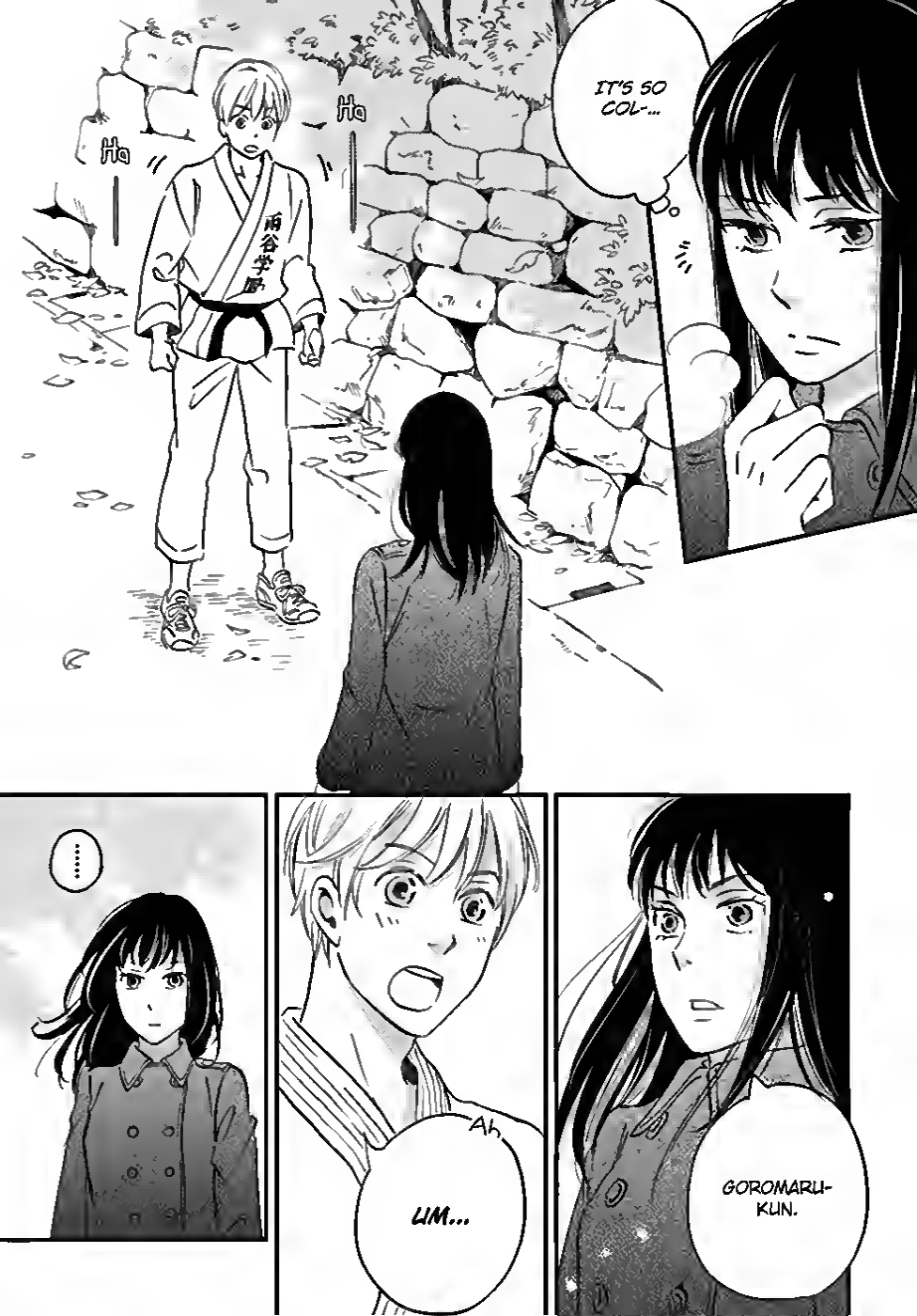
THAT'S BECAUSE TODAY IS THE COLDEST DAY OF THE YEAR SO FAR, APPARENTLY.
Th- the floor is freezing.
IT'LL PROBABLY GET EVEN COLDER FROM HERE ON OUT, SO THE DOJO WILL GET EVEN WORSE.
ICY

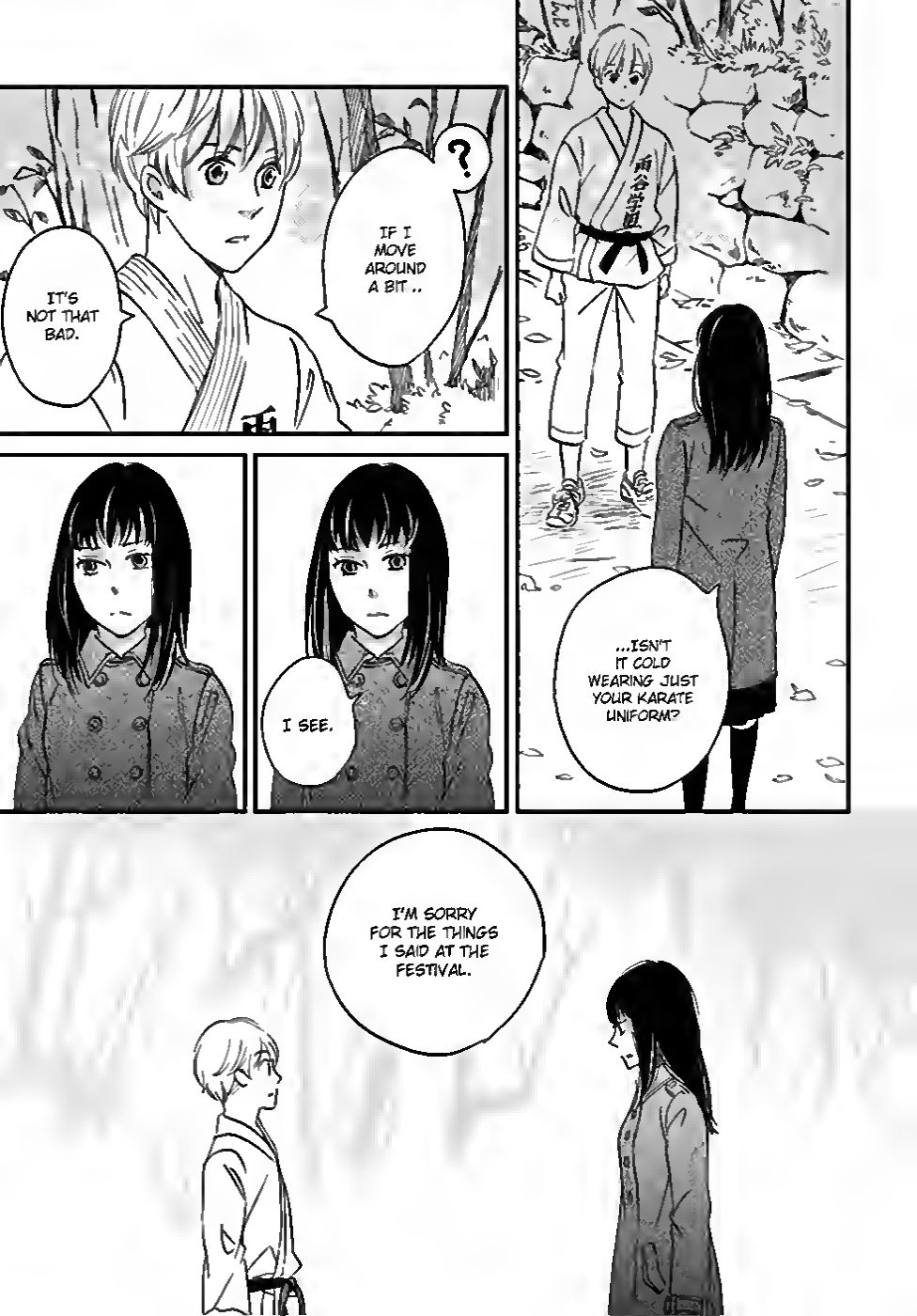
RIGHT
ONCE YOU'RE DONE STRETCHING WE'RE RUNNING A LAP OUTSIDE!
You'll warm up if you move around!
Oh, all huddled together are you, first years?
雨谷学園
It's so cold!!
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
tap
tap
tap

I OFTEN RUN INTO HER HEADING BACK TO SCHOOL AT AROUND THIS TIME...
I KNEW IT!
...AH-
tap
tap
tap
WHAT SHOULD I DO...
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF PRACTICE. I HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO RUN BY HER, BUT...
Glance

DASH
雨谷学園
雨谷学園
雨谷学園
雨谷学園
雨谷学園
...ARE YOU ALRIGHT WITH THAT?
AH-

GORO-CHAN!?
TURN
Heh
HE RAN RIGHT BY ME...
IT'S ONLY NATURAL, I SUPPOSE.
IT WAS PROBABLY TOO CONVENIENT TO THINK WE WOULD BE ABLE TO INTERACT WITH EACH OTHER NORMALLY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE.


IT'S SO COL-...
Ha
Ha
雨谷学園
GOROMARU-KUN.
Ah
UM...
.....


...ISN'T IT COLD WEARING JUST YOUR KARATE UNIFORM?
I SEE.
IF I MOVE AROUND A BIT..
?
IT'S NOT THAT BAD.
I'M SORRY FOR THE THINGS I SAID AT THE FESTIVAL.

WAIT, COULD THIS BE THE CRITICAL TURNING POINT!?
I'VE BEEN WONDERING.
雨谷学園
YEAH...
ME TOO, I DIDN'T-...
WHEN DID YOU START?
AND YET, WHY...
I DON'T THINK I'VE DONE A SINGLE THING TO MAKE YOU COME TO LIKE ME.
HEH
THINKING THAT YOU LIKED ME, I MEAN?

I DON'T KNOW WHEN EITHER!
WAIT, MY MEMORIES OF WHEN I WAS A BOY AND WHEN I WAS A GIRL ARE A LITTLE AMBIGUOUS...
Well...
THAT'S RIGHT.
THE FIRST TIME WE SPOKE YOU DIDN'T LEAVE THAT GOOD OF AN IMPRESSION, SO IT'S A LITTLE STRANGE ISN'T IT?
WHEN I SAID I DID KARATE...
YOU SAID, "ISN'T THAT DANGEROUS FOR YOU SINCE YOU'RE SO SCRAWNY?".
You don't even remember!!
THE FIRST TIME... WHEN WAS THAT AGAIN?

I'M SORRY.
I DON'T REMEMBER THAT AT ALL
YOU DID!
I SAID THAT?
THAT'S JUST HOW IT IS, I GUESS.
ha ha
THOUGH THE TRUTH IS... WE'VE TALKED A LOT MORE WHILE I'VE BEEN JUNKO.

...THE TRUTH IS I'M FEELING CONFUSED EVEN NOW.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.
I KEPT THINKING THAT I NEEDED TO MEET YOU AND APOLOGIZE...
BUT YOUR CONFESSION, AND MEETING YOU TODAY, WERE BOTH SO SUDDEN.
AH, SOMEHOW...
SHE'S REALLY CUTE, ISN'T SHE?
I CAN'T THINK OF THE RIGHT WORDS.
I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING TO SAY SOMETHING STRANGE AGAIN.

...YEAH. I'M STILL WONDERING...
IF I'M JUST BEING STUBBORN ABOUT IT.
I CAN'T COUNT ON WHAT I JUST HAPPEN TO BE FEELING.
SO, WITH SUCH HALFWAY FEELINGS I CAN'T ANSWER Y-
I'M...
HEY, I TOLD YOU THAT I HAD SOMEONE I LIKED, DIDN'T I?
YEAH.
ASUMI-CHAN...
I PROBABLY STILL LIKE THAT PERSON
PROBABLY?
STILL WAITING!!
雨谷

I WANT TO HEAR HOW YOU FEEL!
I'M STILL WAITING! SO NEXT TIME...
W- WAIT!
WHEN IS "NEXT TIME"!?
Intuit
stop
Full

WHEN IT SNOWS, THAT DAY AFTER SCHOOL.
ER...
THEN...
LET'S MEET WHERE THE PATH SPLITS BETWEEN THE BOY'S AND GIRL'S SCHOOLS.
DASH

"WHEN IT SNOWS," HUH?
WHAT'S WITH THAT?
I SAID IT IN THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT, BUT THAT WAS REALLY FORWARD, EVEN FOR ME!
AH, CRAP...
WHAT IF I TURN INTO A GIRL WHEN IT SNOWS, TOO!?

THIS IS REALLY WELL MADE~
WOW
.....
EVEN IF I CAN ONLY WEAR IT WHEN I'M A GIRL, I'LL BE SURE TO TREASURE IT.

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